

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 NEA-10 ISO-00 EB-07 SY-05 DRC-01 CIAE-00
INR-07 NSAE-00 PA-01 PRS-01 USIA-06 EURE-00 /051 W
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FM USMISSION USBERLIN
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIOIRYT 4782
AMEMBASSY LONDON PRIORITY
INFO AMEMBASSY ABU DHABI PRIORITY
USDOC WASHDC UNN

C O N F I D E N T I A L USBERLIN 1651

E.O.11652: GDS
TAGS: EIND, TC, UK, US
SUBJECT: UK JOURNALIST SEEKS CONFIRMATION ON CLASSIFIED
US COMMERCIAL REPORT

1. EVENING OF JUNE 20 GSO-3 P.J. GRIFFIN WHO PREVIOUSLY
SERVED AS CHARGE IN ABU DHABI, RECEIVED TELEPHONE CALL
AT HOME FROM JOURNALIST IN LONDON BY NAME OF "HOBBS"
SEEKING VERIFICATION OF CONTENTS OF AIRGRAM GRIFFIN SENT
IN 197 FROM EMBASSY ABU DHABI DHABI CONCERNING AWARD OF MAJOR
DUBAI DRY DOCK CONTRACT TO BRITISH FIRM OF COSTAIN.
DESCRIBING HIMSELF AS FREE-LANCE JOURNALIST, HOBBS SAID
THAT HE WAS IN POSSESSION OF AUTHENTIC COPY OF AIRGRAM
DRAFTED AT LEAST IN PART BY THEN COMMERCIAL OFFICER OF
EMBASSY, W.N. HOWELL, AND SIGNED BY GRIFFIN AS CHARGE
ALLEGING THAT BRITISH FIRM WAS AWARDED DUBAI CONTRACT
ON BASIS OF "CONNECTIONS" WHICH WER MAINTAINED WITH THE
THEN, AND PRESENT, UAE AMBASSADOR TO THE UK, MAHDI
TAJIR. STRESSING GREAT INTEREST WITHIN THE UK AT THE
PRESENT TIME OF REVELATIONS ABOUT UNETHICAL PRACTICES
AND LARGE PAY-OFFS BY BRITISH FIRMS WORKING IN THE
MIDDLE EAST, INCLUDING ALLEGATIONS THAT TAJIR WAS INVOLVED
IN SEVERAL OF THESE TRASACTIONS, HOBBS REPEATEDLY ASKED
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BRIFFIN TO VERIFY FOR SAKE OF JOURNALIST ACCURACY THE
SUBSTANCE OF AIRGRAM, TEXT OF WHICH HE SAID HE WAS PREPARED TO
READ OVER THE PHONE.

2. GRIFFIN INFORMED HOBBS THAT UNDER NO CIRCUM-
STANCES WOULD HE BE WILLING TO DISCUSS WITH HIM
EITHER ON PHONE OR IN PERSON CONTENTS OF OFFICIAL

DEPARTMENT OF STATE REPORT. QUERIED BY GRIFFIN AS TO HOW SUCH A PRIVILEGED OFFICIAL DOCUMENT CAME INTO HIS POSSESSION, HOBBS ACKNOWLEDGED THAT AIRGRAM ORIGINALLY WAS CLASSIFIED (PRESUMEDLY CONFIDENTIAL) BUT HE CLAIMED THAT MUCH OF IT IN EFFECT HAD BEEN RECENTLY DECONTROLLED. HOBBS WAS INTENTIONALLY VAGUE AS TO HOW HE ACTUALLY OBTAINED THE REPORT, BUT STATED THAT HE THOUGHT IT HAD COME FROM A MEMBER OF THE EMBASSYSTAFF (SIC)--INDIVIDUAL AND LOCATION OF EMBASSY NOT OTHERWISE IDENTIFIED. GRIFFIN GAINED IMPRESSION THAT HOBBS, IF INDEED HE IS A FREE LANCE WRITER, IS TRYING TO AUTHENTICATE AN OFFICIAL US REPORT CRITICIZING COSTAIN'S ETHICS IN WINNING THE DUBAI CONTRACT AND NAMING THE WELL-KNOWN TAJIR AS THE PRINCIPAL PAY-OFF RECEIPT, FOR THE PURPOSE OF PEDDLING TO THE UK MEDIA. ON OTHER HAND, NAME "HOBBS" MAY ONLY BE A PSEUDONYM FOR A REPORTER REPRESENTING A MAJOR BRITISH NEWSPAPER THAT IS SEEKING CONFIRMATION FOR LEADS DEVELOPED IN COURSE OF INVESTIGATING GENERAL THEME OF CORRUPT PRACTICE OF BRITISH FIRMS ENGAGED IN THE MIDDLE EAST.

3. COMMENT: GRIFFIN DOES NOT DISCOUNT POSSIBILITY THAT HOBBS MAY BE BLUFFING ABOUT HIS POSSESSION OF AIRGRAM, BUT THROUGH CONTACTS MAY HAVE BEEN MADE GENERALLY AWARE OF THE EMBASSY ABU DHABI AIRGRAM REPORT CRITICAL OF COSTAIN AND TAJIR, AND THUS WAS FISHING FOR FLESH TO FILL OUT THE BARE BONES OF WHAT THE JOURNALIST OR HIS EMPLOYER REGARD AS A SENSATIONAL STORY. CONFIDENTIAL

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ON BASIS OF STATEMENTS MADE OVER THE PHONE TO GRIFFIN, HOWEVER, LATTER CAN ATTEST TO ACCURACY OF HOBBS' INFORMATION ON THIS SUBJECT.

4. POST WOULD APPRECIATE ANY INFORMATION THAT LONDON CAN PROVIDE AS TO HOBBS JOURNALISTIC BONA FIDES. ALSO, CAN DEPARTMENT OR OTHER ADDRESSEES ADVISE WHETHER ALL OR ANY PART OF AIRGRAM REPORT MENTIONED BY LONDON CALLER HAS BEEN DECONTROLLED OR DISTRIBUTED OUTSIDE THE USG. GEORGE

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01-Jan-1994 12:00:00 am
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: DISCRIMINATION, JOURNALISTS, INFORMATION CONTROL, CLASSIFIED INFORMATION, DEPARTMENTAL COMMUNICATIONS, ALLEGATIONS, CONTRACTS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Sent Date: 22-Jun-1977 12:00:00 am
Decaption Date: 01-Jan-1960 12:00:00 am
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 22 May 2009
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1977USBERL01651
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D770223-0199
Format: TEL
From: USBERLIN
Handling Restrictions: n/a
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Legacy Key: link1977/newtext/t19770629/aaaaazga.tel
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Message ID: 7a686078-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
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Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
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Retention: 0
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Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
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Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: UK JOURNALIST SEEKS CONFIRMATION ON CLASSIFIED US COMMERCIAL REPORT
TAGS: EIND, TC, UK, US
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